

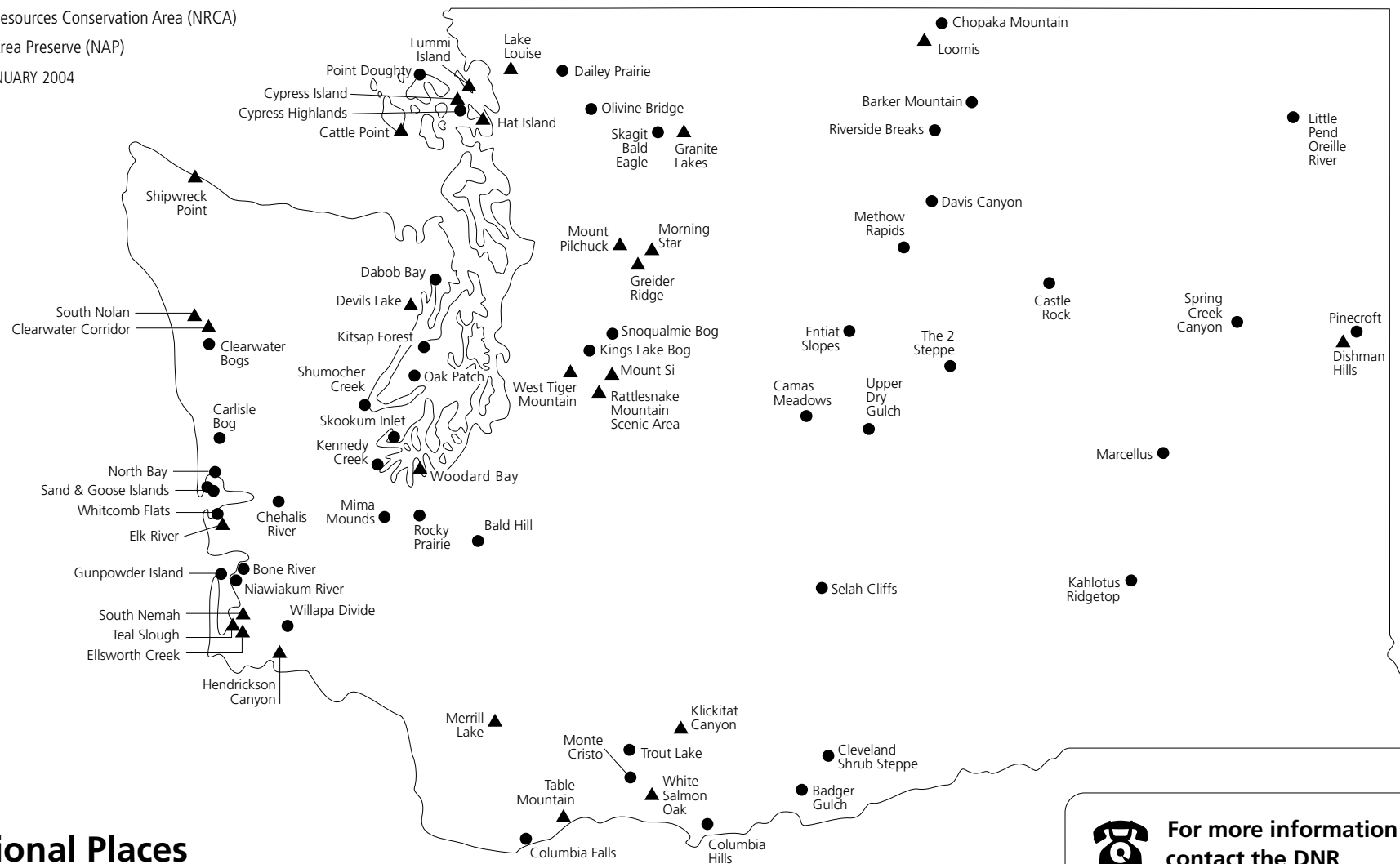
# Washington's Natural Areas



▲ Natural Resources Conservation Area (NRCA)

● Natural Area Preserve (NAP)

AS OF JANUARY 2004



## Exceptional Places

Quality examples of Washington's native grasslands, woodlands, marshes and more are protected in natural areas managed by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). These special sites offer opportunities for research and education. Some have interpretive or recreation trails. Others require DNR permission to visit, because features are sensitive to human disturbance.



**For more information  
contact the DNR**

**Natural Areas Program**

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**[www.dnr.wa.gov](http://www.dnr.wa.gov)**



Teachers, students, and scientific researchers across the state are inspired by opportunities to study Washington's native ecosystems. Many Natural Resources Conservation Areas (NRCAs) provide excellent opportunities for outdoor environmental education for students from elementary grades through college. Natural Area Preserves (NAPs) are well suited for post-graduate studies, scientific research, and monitoring projects.

## Education

The Department of Natural Resources works with educators and students to promote stewardship and understanding of natural systems on natural areas. These outdoor classrooms offer viewing platforms, trails with interpretive signs, and parking for school buses. Teachers can arrange guided exploration that complements their curriculum. For example:

- ▶ Local schools in Klickitat County are participating in a volunteer water quality monitoring program for the Trout Lake NAP.
  - ▶ Each year, hundreds of students traverse the half-mile interpretive trail at the Mima Mounds NAP in Thurston County to learn about the rare and mysterious mounded prairie landscape.
  - ▶ Grays Harbor Community College students use the Elk River NRCA in Grays Harbor County to study estuarine ecology.
- At the college level, Natural Areas Program staff lead numerous field trips for undergraduate science classes.



JANET PEARCE / DNR

**Students enjoy learning about special features of the Chehalis River Surge Plain NAP.**

## Research

Research and monitoring are undertaken to evaluate the effectiveness of management activities and to track significant changes in ecological features over time. Examples of important research and monitoring activities occurring on DNR natural areas include:

- ▶ A University of Victoria graduate student who is developing restoration plans for British Columbia is using Bald Hill NAP in Thurston County as an example of how native Garry oak ecosystems should work and look.
- ▶ Monitoring rare plant populations at westside and eastside sites, including Columbia Hills, Camas Meadows, Rocky Prairie, and Selah Cliffs NAPs.
- ▶ Using a prescribed, experimental fire at Camas Meadows NAP in Chelan County to test the effect of fire as a management tool to protect the habitat for a federally threatened plant species, the Wenatchee Mountains checker-mallow.



DAVID WILDERMAN / DNR

**At Upper Dry Gulch NAP a graduate student records data on a rare plant, Whited's milkvetch (*Astragalus sinuatus*).**

Educators and researchers are encouraged to contact DNR for additional information about using NAPs and NRCAs as outdoor classrooms and research sites.

### EDUCATION CONTACTS

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